

15
I know that Henry and Henry and the
little ones have spent a New Year in Rock-
ledge, the house seems quite deserted; but I
am very anxious that they are not farther off,
and that you will be able to see each other often
and to all the door near the Park.

Roxbury, Nov. 9, 1876.

Dear Wendell:

After he has seen "the last of
earth," it has sometimes been difficult
to determine accurately when this or that
particular man came into "this breathing
world" or went out of it; but, in regard to
the first event, it is seldom that he him-
self is left in doubt. You know how du-
bious it is in my own case; whether I
was born in the year 1804 or 1805, and
whether on the 10th or 12th day of Decem-
ber of that year. My reckoning was from
the 10th of December, 1804, until I saw
my mother's oldest sister at Deer Island
in 1835, when she assured me that I had
antedated the time of my birth one year;
and about this she could not be mistaken,
because she had a son (perhaps it was

a daughter) born about the same time, and therefore able to remember the coincidence. So, having no family record to fall back upon, I was disposed to accept her statement, especially as it was the gain of a year; but, you will recollect, just before leaving for England in 1867, I was prompted to do—what ^{it} is strange I had never thought of doing before—i. e., to consult the town records of Newburyport; and there, to my surprise, I found the time of my nativity inscribed December 12th, 1804! Hence, I concluded to substitute that year for 1805, and the 12th for the 10th of December.

But now it is quite certain that my aunt was right, and that the ^{town} record is wrong, difficult as it may be to explain the clerical error, as appears by the following extract from a letter written by my father to his parents, dated Granville, April 4th, 1805:—

"Much respected Parents—This, per-

haps, is the last you may expect from me, dated at Granville, as I am about to remove to Newburyport, in the United States, where I expect to spend the remainder of my days. . . . I have settled my business here, and am about to remove. . . . Fanny and the little ones are well. Little Jimmy says I must tell granny Angus he has got a little fife and trumpet, and a penknife, and he can sing a good many tunes. . . . I should be happy to write to all my relations, but have scarcely time."

To this letter my mother appends a few lines, bidding farewell to her parents, and expressing her gratitude for their care and attention, and invoking upon them "the blessing of God in all things temporal and spiritual."

It is evident, therefore, that my parents removed from Granville in April or May, 1805; and as it is certain that I was born in Newburyport, it is equally

certain that it was in December, the same year, that "a man-child" was born in my person. So, next month, I shall complete my 71st instead of my 72d year. Whether it was the 10th or 12th of December is not material; but I still believe it was the 10th. It is barely possible that, in my hurried examination of the town records of Newburyport, I may have mistaken the year 1804 for 1805; and I mean to take a fresh look at them when next I visit my native place. Of course, it is now impossible to tell when the town clerk was apprised of my birth (it might have been long afterward), or by whom it was communicated; for I suppose the records were somewhat loosely kept in those days.

Last week I attended the funeral of my old friend Jacob Horton, of Newburyport. His wife grew up with me as an elder sister, and she agreed with my Deer Island aunt as to the year of my birth. But, whether younger or older, I am always
Your loving Father.